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## Senior Health and Wellness Newsletter

Kentucky Department for Aging and Independent Living

### Preventing Malnutrition by Nourishing Your Muscles

Muscles play an important factor not only in strength and energy but just to live a healthier life. Muscle mass is the amount of muscle your body may have at any given point. As we age, muscle mass declines. After the age of 40 muscle mass can decline as much as 8% every 10 years. After the age of 70 that percentage doubles.

Muscle loss can impact overall health and recovery from sickness. It can cause weakness and increase rates of falling. Losing muscle is natural, but its rate of loss and effects do not have to be natural. You can make changes today to slow down muscle loss and help maintain a healthy lifestyle to help keep you in your home, doing the things you love.

#### Understanding Muscles

Muscles house the majority of protein in your body. They are the largest component of lean body mass. Lean body mass is anything that makes up your body except for fat. Healthy muscles help with strength, balance, organ function, healthy skin, immunity and wound healing. Muscles are very important to maintain as we age.



Why do we lose muscle as we age?

As we age, our muscle fibers shrink. Muscle tissue is replaced more slowly than it was when we were younger. When muscle is lost it can be replaced by a tough fibrous tissue or fatty tissue which can lead to weakness and loss of function.

Noticing muscle loss early is the best way of preventing it. Some of the key Muscle Loss Indicators are:

- Weakness
- Slower walking speed
- Less strength
- Unintended weight loss
- Exhaustion
- Low physical activity
- Body pain and cramps

Muscle loss cannot always be seen and it is important to pay attention to the signs of muscle loss.

Illness and injury occur when muscle is lost. Having the proper nutrition can help you maintain an independent life. The body requires the proper nutrition and as you age it become even more important.

Certain nutrients can help contribute to healthy muscles and support energy and strength as you age.

**Protein—** Protein is part of every tissue in your body. It helps to build, repair, and maintain tissues as well as making important hormones and enzymes to help in transporting nutrients in the body. Eating more protein can help to lessen the amount of muscle mass lost due to age. You can increase protein in the diet by eating more beans, nuts, seeds, lean red meat, chicken, fish, and tofu.

For healthy adults, around 36 grams of protein is recommended for every 100 pounds of weight.

For the elderly, 45-67 grams of protein for every 100 pounds of weight is recommended.

References:

<http://www.nutritionnews.abbott/content/dam/an/newsroom/factsheetpdf/2016%20Abbott%20MuscleHealthReport.pdf>

[https://tools.silversneakers.com/Eligibility/CheckEligibility?\\_ga=2.151493689.163097174.1529431755-140766362.1529431755](https://tools.silversneakers.com/Eligibility/CheckEligibility?_ga=2.151493689.163097174.1529431755-140766362.1529431755)

**Vitamin D—** Vitamin D is a fat soluble vitamin that helps in supporting your muscles. Vitamin D deficiency is common and can increase as you age. When someone is deficient it can cause a decrease in muscle strength. You can increase your Vitamin D by consuming Fortified milk, cheese, eggs, fish liver oil, and fatty fish. Exposure to sunlight is another way to increase Vitamin D. Early morning sun is the best time to be in the sun.

### Take Action for Muscle Health

- Maintain a balanced diet
- Incorporate Protein and Vitamin D into your diet
- Talk to your Health-care provider
- Exercise your muscles with resistance training. Talk to your doctor about if a safe exercise regimen. The *Silver Sneakers* is a program for those 65 years and older that may allow you to go to the gym if you have Medicare coverage. Talk to your doctor about the program.

## Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Family Services Department for Aging and Independent Living

275 East Main Street 3E-E  
Frankfort Kentucky 40621  
Phone: 502-564-6930

<https://chfs.ky.gov/agencies/dail/Pages/nutrition.aspx>